

[Review] Stefano Jossa (2013) Un paese senza eroi: L'Italia da Jacopo Ortis a Montalbano

Article (Published Version)

Moroncini, Ambra (2015) [Review] Stefano Jossa (2013) Un paese senza eroi: L'Italia da Jacopo Ortis a Montalbano. *Modern Language Review*, 110 (2). pp. 565-567. ISSN 0026-7937

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The differences between Pinocchio and Frankenstein are also noted and analysed, among other things, by Charles Klopp in Chapter 3. According to him, Pinocchio's vitality and its/his experiential curve is an ascending and triumphant one that is starkly different from the descent into degradation of Shelley's Creature.

In Chapter 4 Jill Fell carefully deals with Alfred Jarry's creation: the drawing/caricature/silhouette/puppet Monsieur Ubu. Special attention is paid to the 'theme' of the nose, considered as both a caricatural element and a symbol of death. In Chapter 5 Christopher Cairns provides a very stimulating discussion of Fo's innovative use of mannequins, as inspired by De Chirico and Carrà, but probably by the Bragaglia brothers and Totò too.

'Unpainting Collodi's Fireplace', by Stephen Wilson, is the title of Chapter 6, which is accompanied by an interview conducted by Susan Lawson in which Wilson describes his artistic work as inspired by the puppet's adventures. In Chapter 7 Katia Pizzi brilliantly explores Luciano Folgore's papers dedicated to Pinocchio and to his 'pinocchiate', that is, his comic rewritings and free reinventions of the puppet's adventures. The entertaining mixture of fairy-tale characters suggests the presence of the great model of Sergio Tofano's *Il romanzo delle mie delusioni* (1917). Chapters 8 and 9 are both written by Salvatore Consolo, who first describes the mythological and heroic dimension of Pinocchio, and then analyses the transition from Collodi's page to the silver screen, paying special attention to Roberto Benigni's film and its mixed critical reception. In the final chapter, devoted to the 'Digital Pinocchio', Massimo Riva remarks that Pinocchio embodies a fundamental ambivalence of modernity: its myth of endless renewal and growth. As a combination of virtual and physical, Pinocchio maintains its appeal because 'it is focused on that evanescent threshold, on that crucial transition from childhood to young adulthood' (p. 203). Once again, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*—or simply *Pinocchio*—confirms its status as a universal and timeless literary masterpiece, written for both children and adults.

COLLODI-PESCIA

DANIELA MARCHESCHI

Un paese senza eroi: l'Italia da Jacopo Ortis a Montalbano. By STEFANO JOSSA. Rome and Bari: Laterza. 2013. xii+283 pp. £23.09. ISBN 978-88-581-0666-2.

A few years after *L'Italia letteraria* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006), Stefano Jossa brings to our attention another significant literary study on Italian national identity, but this time more focused on national iconography, and with an original and sharp-sighted line of argument: Italy is a country with no (literary) heroes.

In ten compelling chapters, where literary criticism stands aloof from dry erudition in order to embrace a historical, philosophical, sociological, anthropological, and political dialogue, the reader is convincingly led to recognize that if Italian literature has not produced a celebrated national hero equivalent to Robin Hood, d'Artagnan, or William Tell, this is actually a positive thing. In fact—Jossa argues—while the national hero can have a detrimental effect on society, 'l'eroe funziona come un mito salvifico per chi lo desidera e mito narcisistico per chi s'identifica'

(p. 27), the anti-hero, on the contrary, acts according to his/her ethical values, and not for opportunistic reasons. The clear allusion to some Italian historical leaders who, sometimes for better but most often for worse, have become legendary (Garibaldi, Mussolini, Berlusconi) is not difficult to perceive.

The ethical conduct of the anti-heroes who have become heroes at a personal rather than historical level can be recognized from the first Italian novels, among which Foscolo's *Jacopo Ortis* and Nievo's *Confessioni d'un Italiano* are masterfully explored. If critical insights into the reasons why D'Annunzio's *superuomo* failed to be appreciated as the potential national hero are very much pertinent to Jossa's line of enquiry, where his book utterly mesmerizes is when he examines the 'little' heroes of our Italian pedagogic literature: *Pinocchio*, *Enrico*, and *Gian Burrasca*. All three literary characters, as Jossa discusses, could have been considered ideal candidates for the role of national hero inculcating the educational values of the new Italian nation, and indeed *Pinocchio*'s iconic character was reshaped and exploited by Fascist propaganda. Fortunately, however, Collodi, De Amicis, and Bertelli endowed these three little characters with such a complex nature, which is so caught up in the emotional universe of childhood upbringing, that they have managed to escape the cold symbolic destiny of heroic characters.

Another captivating analysis occurs in Chapter 8, where Pirandello's and Svevo's *inetti esistenziali* are examined. They are considered to be neither heroes intent on dominating their time, nor anti-heroes proudly standing against the compromises of their experience, but modern *personaggi* aware of the multiplicity of viewpoints. Yet the antagonistic nature of Mattia and Zeno, as well as the ideological divergence of the two novels, is clearly identified.

The most gripping part of the book, however, is perhaps Chapter 9. The ever-present risk of writing 'glorious' literature is here expressed through Calvino's own reflections on the difficulties, in post-war Italy, of creating a national literary role model. Pin and Kim, therefore, but also Fenoglio's *Johnny*, are not heroes of the Italian Resistance, but 'true' literary figures who provide an ethical model to all the readers who experienced the Resistance as partisans and as children. Consequently, it is not by chance that this chapter, which reflects also on heroism as interpretation of historical class experience, ends with Pratolini's *Metello*, who, though far from being a righteous hero, can nonetheless be recognized as a true man of the working class.

The last romantic anti-hero of Italian literature, Don Fabrizio di Salina, opens the sharp discussion in Jossa's last chapter, which is, however, mainly focused on Camilleri's mass hero Montalbano. If in Tomasi di Lampedusa's *Gattopardo* we are reminded of the dialectics between the historical hero (Tancredi) and the individualistic, disenchanted anti-hero (Don Fabrizio), the analysis of Montalbano's rise to exemplary model of the Italian nation gives our author the chance to confirm his line of argument: the need on the part of the mass to create myths to feed public opinion. In his concluding remarks, therefore, Jossa emphatically invites the reader to distinguish a (national) hero, who most often is a superficial figure of adoration,

from a (true) hero, who in ethical terms has maintained a solid resistance to ideological instrumentalization.

This is an insightful analysis, and a fascinating read throughout. Although one might argue that the absence of female heroines/anti-heroines is a regrettable oversight, it is unquestionable that Jossa's rich and intellectually coherent discourse on the *dignitas hominis* of Italian literary anti-heroes is a precious addition to scholarship in Italian Studies. It is not surprising, therefore, that this volume was shortlisted for the Viareggio Rëpaci Book Award in 2014.

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Amor che move: linguaggio del corpo e forma del desiderio in Dante, Pasolini e Morante. By MANUELE GRAGNOLATI. Milan: Il Saggiatore. 2013. 236 pp. €19. ISBN 978-88-428-1865-6.

In this stimulating and well-executed study, Manuele Gragnolati uses what is called a diffractive approach, a methodology taken from the theoretical work of Donna Haraway, whereby texts that may not appear to have any apparent or obvious connection are put into contact with one another in order to produce new and resonant interconnections of a non-hierarchical nature, as they bounce off one another, analogously to the way in which diffracted light spreads out. He succeeds admirably in doing just that: Dante, Pasolini, and Morante all benefit from his flexible and yet quite rigorous interpretation and application of this methodology, which, as I understand it, is essentially a critical mode that proposes to avoid traditional comparative paradigms and straightforward source studies. The authors included in Gragnolati's volume do have well-known and already studied connections, of course, but this diffractive approach allows for the discovery of additional ways in which their works create cross-dialogues and cross-references that are not easily discerned or explicitly expressed by more standard approaches.

The emphasis of Gragnolati's book is on the topics of desire, the body, and language as they are expressed in Dante's *Vita nuova* and *Commedia*, in Pasolini's *La divina mimesis* and *Petrolio*, and in Morante's final novel, *Aracoeli*. What is most remarkable to my mind is how the structure of his book perfectly reflects the content and critical approach, for we move in a genuinely diffractive manner from Dante to the other authors and then back to Dante and again to the modern authors in a fluid, wave-like, and ultimately cumulative manner, as resonances collect and meanings gradually deepen. This is also a book that openly embraces a 'queer' approach, which does not mean simply concentrating on the gay or non-heterosexually normative elements of the texts, but rather veering from traditional or standard readings in order to search for the oblique aspects that a less 'queer' approach would most likely miss.

Gragnolati's claims begin with the idea that Dante's *Vita nuova* creates, perhaps for the first time, the performative and therefore modern author, while Pasolini's *Divina mimesis* destroys this figure. In the *libello* there is the exemplary *auctor* but there is also the character who is individualized and whose experiences are